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SACRED JOURNEY



THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER ~ APRIL / MAY 2007

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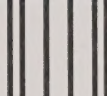
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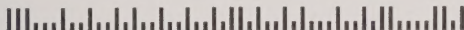
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C O N T E N T S

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Cover photo by Tessa Macintosh, Tipi Aurora.	

To compliment our interview with Mike Bell, we have chosen to feature the photography of Tessa Macintosh, whose work captures the unique characteristics of the Canadian Arctic.

Sacred Journey, Sacred World

Lhaktong Sönam



[W]e have possibilities of experiencing the sacred world, a world which has self-existing richness and brilliance. ...[Natural] order includes all the aspects of life—including those that are ugly and bitter and sad. But even those qualities are part of the rich fabric of existence that can be woven into our being. In fact, we are woven already into the fabric—whether we like it or not. Recognizing that link...allows us to stop complaining about and fighting with our world. Instead, we can begin to celebrate and promote the sacredness of the world.

~Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior

In springtime, joy rises with the sap. The mornings grow brighter, the air warmer, the earth more fragrant, the trees shyly greener. And with this change of seasons, we feel, like our world, renewed.

By both physical makeup and ancient habit, we resonate with the natural world. The longing to open outward, to feel the flow of the world's energies, may be the first sacred impulse. Many of us, indeed, consider it a spiritual act just to "get out into nature" and "take it all in."

Trouble starts, though, when we think that the sacred exists "out there," or that we can capture it and bring it

Lhaktong Sönam, a member of the board of Fellowship in Prayer, lives near Princeton, NJ and practices Buddhism in the Tibetan tradition.

“in here.” Thrilled by spring’s glories, we seek spirituality in the beauty of nature. We become like tourists in our own experience, trying too hard to see nature in ways that make life feel vivid.

Then, on the nature walk that was supposed to lift us up, something happens that we didn’t want. A sudden cold wind brings gray clouds; a beloved old oak has fallen in a storm, a dead woodchuck lies across our path. Suddenly, the world we counted on to make us feel spiritual turns out not to be what we hoped for, and we feel disenchanted, disgusted, somehow displaced.

We fall too easily into this kind of trap, like astronomers looking forever through the wrong end of a telescope. Instead of letting our perceptions open up vast new realms, we try to compress that vastness into a tiny, narrow perspective that suits us, then lose heart when it doesn’t all fit.

We might applaud ourselves for giving money or votes to protect the wilderness against corporate magnates who want nature to serve them—a worthy effort, certainly. But if we demand that the natural world become our inspiring scenery, or our means of experiencing life’s freshness, we too are asking nature to serve us—as though it existed for us.

This month, *SACRED JOURNEY* contemplates different spiritual understandings of the natural world: ways of being and believing that treat individual lives as parts of a greater whole; that respect our common heritage of land, sea and sky; that require us not to take the universe in but to dissolve out into it; that foreground not our personal experience, but the ways in which all things relate to each other. May some of these visions evoke for you, too, the sacredness of this world just as it is, free of our expectations and full of joyful possibility.

A Change of Seasons at Fellowship in Prayer

Any study of nature reveals a constant state of flux and change, one season gives way to another, each with its own unique beauty—linking past to future in a continuous cycle of life. Here at Fellowship in Prayer, we are experiencing our own change of season as our Editor, Louise Hutner, and Assistant Editor, Michele Naphen, have resigned from their respective positions and are pursuing new opportunities. This change became effective at the conclusion of their work on the February/March issue of the journal. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them formally for sharing their gifts with us over the years and to offer them our continued good wishes and prayers...

Little posey of Bearberry blossoms by Tessa Macintosh



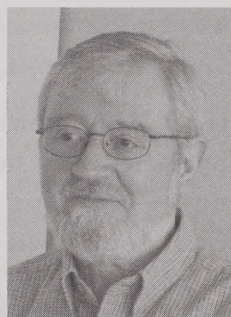
OUR FEATURE

An Interview With

Mike J. Bell



Mike Bell is a management consultant whose interest in community and organizational development spans nearly five decades. Mike has a Masters Degree in Theology from St. Paul's University in Ottawa and a Masters Degree in Communications from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He began his career as a Roman Catholic priest. He has worked in inner city poverty programs in the Northeast United States, as a student chaplain at the Cité Internationale de Paris, as a street-worker and community organizer in Milwaukee, and in social services management in British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, the new Inuit homeland in the Eastern Arctic. In 1986 Mike established his consulting firm, Inukshuk Management Consultants, specializing in organizational and community development directed toward aboriginal organizations, community groups and government departments to the Canadian Arctic. For over twenty years, he has worked closely with the Inuit and Dene peoples. His special area of interest—his passion in life—is to help build a conceptual and psychic bridge that links the traditional teachings and spirituality of aboriginal elders with the lessons



of the new science and cosmology. Mike believes organizations and communities are infused with the same energy force or Spirit that guides the development of the living universe, and as such, the framework for organizational development needs to flow from this guidance.

Mike and his wife recently moved to Vancouver Island in British Columbia. He continues to work on projects with northern aboriginal groups and is writing a book on aboriginal self-government in the North. To learn more about Mike and his work or to read his essays, you may visit his website at www.inukshukmanagement.ca

Janet Haag: Journeys are interesting . . . would you begin by telling us how you got to be where you are right now—working with the aboriginal peoples of the Canadian Arctic?

Mike Bell: One of the things I became fascinated with over the years was culture. I was doing postgraduate studies and working as a student chaplain in Paris in May of 1968 when the student riots broke out. Across the street from where I lived was a huge campus residence with six thousand students from different countries in forty national houses. Because of the student unrest, the universities and their libraries closed down. I couldn't do research and the only books I had were Marshall McLuhan's books on communications. I was struck by his observation that often we simply don't notice the context around us. He said, "I don't know who it was who first discovered water, but I'm sure it wasn't the fish." This quote kind of highlights what happened next. I wandered into a large student restaurant one day and three to four hundred people were eating off tin plates; the noise was

deafening. Most of them were dressed in their national garb and they were all speaking their own languages. It was like an eatery on the ground floor of the Tower of Babel. As I was standing in the food line watching this wonderful scene, a couple of American students were standing next to me when one of them said to the other, "Geez, I wish we had a culture, don't you?" That comment had a profound influence on me. It's amazing! I thought, People really don't notice their own culture or the impact it is having on other cultures.

Years later, in 1980, my family and I moved to Baffin Island in the eastern Arctic. I became Director of Social Services and was constantly flying into small Inuit communities in the long winter darkness to attend meetings to discuss issues and explain the department's services. We'd be moving right along, dealing with some important issue when some elder would get up and start talking about life on the land, how people used to relate to one another, or the characteristics of seals or whales or some other animal. Like most of the other people in the room, I listened respectfully but I thought the stories were "off-topic"—irrelevant to the issues we were dealing with. Basically, I was arrogant. I had all the latest techniques for developing services and helping them—strategic planning, Japanese management approaches and so forth. I was convinced these principles were just what the Inuit communities needed.

When I discovered my management-by-objectives weren't working, my world began to crash around me. My techniques were creating useless organizational and cultural contexts that didn't work in the Inuit culture. Chastened by my lack of success, I started traveling around Canada and the United States, attending workshops, trying to

reeducate myself and looking for a context that would work. I remember quite distinctly becoming aware of the new cosmology with its recognition that organisms and organizations are both part of a living universe. Reading Thomas Berry's work, I was captivated by his insight, "The Earth is not a collection of objects, it is a community of subjects. The universe is the only text without a context."

This statement had a profound influence on my life and my work. Then a funny thing happened. I noticed that some of the most unlikely people—physicists, biologists, philosophers, mathematicians—experts I had been meeting at conferences—were talking about what was happening in the world and about the importance of learning from aboriginal peoples, their world view and their spirituality. I said to myself, I know far more aboriginal people than they do, and I quickly came to the conclusion that either I had been missing something, or these experts didn't know what they were talking about. I decided I had been missing something and so I began to think back to the stories I had heard from the elders at the top of Baffin Island in the dark on those long winter nights. I began to hear in the voices of the elders, the wisdom of the living universe and connectedness, vocation and responsibility—and these organizing principles of the universe became the context I was seeking.

Would you describe some of the traditional teachings and spirituality of the Inuit people with whom you work?

Sure, but I want to start with a distinction—I can tell you my observations of their spirituality and culture but my knowledge is secondhand. I'm not an expert in Inuit culture. If you want to know about the Inuit, you really have to go to the Inuit elders. I work between cultures . . .

my area of expertise is to help people of different cultures understand one another and work together. Some years ago when I asked Tom Berry, my mentor and friend, have you written anything on an earth-based spirituality? He said, “No I haven’t.” Then he added, “But I have written something on the spirituality of the earth.”

I think his comment is very significant because of the way we tend to look at spirituality as somehow separate from the rest of life. Teilhard de Chardin suggested, “We’re not human beings on a spiritual journey, we are spiritual beings on a human journey.” For the Inuit, there are not a lot of distinctions between their life, their spirituality and the land. These are all locked together, so asking them a question about their spirituality which distinguishes it from other aspects of their lives, as my question to Tom Berry did, means we are already taking an approach based on our western point of view. For the Inuit everything is bound together and spiritual knowledge emerges out of the soul of their culture.

Since moving into settlements, many Inuit have become Christian but they still retain their traditional spirituality, founded on four primary relationships. They would say our primary relationship as spiritual beings is with the land—and the land is everything. It is the source of learning, healing, nourishment, propagation and child-rearing. If we destroy the land, we destroy ourselves. We don’t own the land. It owns us. It is our relationship with the land that renews Spirit and keeps it alive. Inuit cosmology stresses an intimate relationship between people and animals. They believe humans and animals form a single community—and there are all kinds of rituals around this relationship. There is a very strong sense that the land is living—that the land and animals have rights.



Inuit Boy by Tessa Macintosh

This idea is what the Inuit call *Avatittinnik Kamattiarniq*, environmental stewardship. However, you see, it goes beyond the modern notion of environmental protection or land and wildlife management. They believe there is a fundamental equity between humans and animals in a shared environment. If we are hunting, it is the animals who give themselves to us and if we don't respect them, the next time we go through that region, the animals won't give themselves. To care for the land and hunt effectively, we need *Qamuqtuurniq*, resourcefulness, the ability to improvise with what is at hand to survive on the land.

The second relationship is with one's own family. The family comes first. It is where children grow and develop, families prosper, marriages take place, elders are cared for, and communities and coalitions are formed so the group can survive. Until the early 1960's when they moved into settlements, most Inuit lived a traditional, nomadic lifestyle. They lived off the land in small communities. Their survival depended on helping one another. Within the family, we are linked to our ancestors; to our traditions and culture; and we learn our responsibilities to future generations. *Pijitsirnjig* is how the Inuit talk about serving and providing for others. It expresses the obligation one has for the family and its survival—and by extension, to other members of the community. It is one of the identifying characteristics of a strong leader in Inuit society.

The third relationship has to do with the personal relationship, to one's own inner spirit. The elders teach that each of us has a spirit or energy force (sometimes referred to as "medicine power") and it is leading us somewhere. It gives us certain duties and responsibilities. Each one of us is called to recognize the Spirit in ourselves and others and to develop this Spirit to the fullest extent.

Pilnimmaksarniq describes passing on knowledge through observing and practicing. The Inuit pride themselves on the ability to survive in what most people would think is one of the harshest climates in the world; the Inuit child must be able to adapt to constantly changing situations, learn the art of discipline and become prepared to take his/her rightful role in the family and community. The young person's sense of personal identity and worth is deepened through this education.

Finally, there are the relationships with others—the social groupings outside one's immediate family—to organizations within and outside of the culture. One of the traditional teachings of many aboriginal elders is that the community and its organizations will only be as strong as the culture, and the culture will only be as strong as the community and its organizations. *Piliriquatigiingiq* is the notion of collaborative working relationships for the common good. *Aajiiqatigiingiq* is the Inuit way of decision-making based on comparing views or taking counsel to obtain consensus.

Within all their relationships, the Inuit work from traditional knowledge—*Inuit Qaujimajatuqanginnut* (IQ)—the principles which guide them in their day-to-day activities. The dominant value that I have heard repeated, time and time again, is respect. Respect for everything. Respect for the land. Respect for the family. Respect for yourself. Respect for your community.

Another aspect of their spirituality has to do with the concept of the shaman. I would ask the elders, When you were living on the land, how did you know when to move from one area to another? They answered, "The shaman would tell us." The shaman was the person who had a special relationship with the land and the animals.

How did someone become a shaman?

Well basically, a person was identified at a very early age as potentially becoming a shaman. Traditionally, this was followed by a period of learning. We have this not only among Inuit, we also have it among the Dene and other nomadic tribes. In Siberia, archeologists uncovered Inuit Shaman artifacts dating back to the late 18th century, including a shaman robe with a copper mirror attached. The mirror was a symbol of the shaman's ability to see into the future but it was also something more. When the people looked into the mirror, the shaman was able to reflect back to them what they were going through. The key role of the shaman was to be a healer. We are not just talking about physical healing. Historical studies that have been done about shamanism, particularly among the Inuit, point out that the shaman was responsible for helping a person discover his/her lost soul. It is believed that when people are in difficulty or having problems, the soul somehow escapes. It was the shaman's role to find the soul and bring it back to the individual.

Reflecting on your own life and experience, if you were to act as a shaman of sorts and were to tell us in the western world how we should recapture our souls—what would you say?

One of the things I think we need most in our lives today is meaning. We are surrounded by materialism. We often fail to recognize there is another real world, the spiritual world. Shamans direct people to that spiritual world. They are shape-shifters. Let me explain, a shaman could take the shape of a caribou and you could talk to the caribou. The shaman could understand what it is like

being a caribou and thereby facilitate negotiation with the caribou on the part of the people. We have lost the ability to understand or appreciate the assumptions on which we are working most of the time. This becomes most apparent in the political problems we encounter. We think we have rights to do certain things but we do not give these same rights to other people, to other species, to the Earth itself. If there is going to be a world where there is social justice, we need to be able to shift shapes and get in touch with the spiritual world of others, including the Earth's.

Let me tell you an interesting story about how we can get caught up in our own limited perspective on things. Some years ago I went to Ottawa with a group of Inuit and Dene politicians as part of a committee doing a study on the Northern economy. Just before our meeting got started with the federal officials, a couple of Inuks were engaged in animated discussion with officials from the Department of External Affairs about traveling to Greenland. They wanted the government to cut through all the paperwork and make it easier for the Inuit to go to and from Greenland for economic and cultural exchanges. Finally an argument erupted between an Inuk and a civil servant who was insisting on adhering to all the rules. The civil servant was clearly exasperated with the Inuk's ignorance about "the way things had to be done." "Look," he finally said in a demeaning tone, "you don't get it—Greenland is a foreign country. You can't go over there without the proper papers." The Inuk looked at him and said, "No, Sir—you don't get it. We have been going over there without papers for a thousand years."

How is this gap between traditional knowledge and the modern world to be bridged?

We have to establish common ground and share some kind of context. We don't have the dialogue taking place in which people think about and share what they have in common and that's a major problem for us. For many white people, land is real estate. For the aboriginal people, land is the source of their life and spirituality. For many white people, elders are senior citizens, old people. For the aboriginals, respected elders are the passers-on of tradition. We have to begin by recognizing that the earth is primary for all of us. It is our common ground. We can learn from its ecosystems and bio-regions what other systems should look like—how things that are different can interact for the common good. The universe and the earth are revelatory.

How has your work with aboriginal people affected your own spirituality?

I see my spirit, my soul, as the human manifestation of the broader, more whole spirit that I refer to as the *anima mundi*—the soul of the earth. I believe there are two great books that nourish my spirituality, Book I and Book II. Book II for me is the Bible. Book I is the universe revealing itself. From the aboriginal people I have learned that the land is a place of healing, a place of prayer. Basically, I see myself standing between two worlds—the world of the aboriginal peoples, and the world of modern organizations and communities. I am trying to help build the kind of conceptual and psychic bridge that will enable aboriginal peoples to bring across their traditional values and culture into the present and apply them to creating the institutions they need to thrive and to regain their ability to govern themselves and determine their own future. At the

beginning of every New Year, when I start a new Daytimer to schedule appointments, I write a favorite quote from Teilhard de Chardin, “The future belongs to those who can give a reason to hope.” It captures what I think my calling is—trying to give people a reason to hope, to overcome the many social and economic problems that face communities in the North. This sense of hope emerges out of understanding and appreciating the living earth, patience with the earth, and a future with the earth. Sometimes when I go walking with my dog, I come across an inukshuk* that someone had built. I pause and reflect on the difficulties so many people in the North are having. I pray and I remember that the inukshuk has deep roots in Inuit culture—as a directional marker, signifying safety, hope and friendship on the journey—it stands strong, a sign of the indomitable spirit of a people.

* See page 46.

I L L U M I N A T I O N S



Just living is not enough. . .one must have sunshine,
freedom and a little flower.

~ *Hans Christian Andersen*

On Faith; if the sun and the moon should ever doubt,
they would immediately go out.

~ *William Blake*

We all use imagery every day when we engage in the
two most common forms of worry: either regretting
the past or fearing the future. But we can use that
same ability in a more positive way. The more you
bring your attention, or conscious awareness, to
something you intend to manifest, the more likely
that intention will become real in the world.

~ *Candace B. Pert, PhD*

The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist
expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails.

~ *William Arthur Ward*

Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to
play in and pray in where nature may heal and cheer
and give strength to the body and soul.

~ *John Muir*

I believe, I believe, It's silly, but I believe.

~ *George Seaton*

Nothing happens in living nature that does not bear some relation to the whole. Nature—however manifold it may appear—is never-the-less always a single entity, a unity.

~ *Goethe*

Our ideas must be as broad as nature if they are to interpret nature.

~ *Arthur Conan Doyle*

There can be no happiness if the things we believe in are different from the things we do.

~ *Sri Ganeshaswami*

Kites rise highest against the wind—not with it.

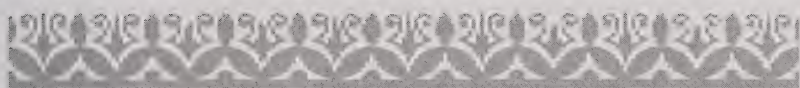
~ *Sir Winston Churchill*

We all have one and the same God, and we are one in the unified worship of God, even if our works and vocations are different.

~ *Martin Luther*

I searched, *Spreading Sunshine*, on the internet to see what I could find. What I came up with was a story about a man in Wales who threw money into the air because he wanted to “spread a little sunshine!” Since his generosity sparked a town scuffle that involved the police, I don’t recommend his method, but personally, I find his commitment to the concept of Spreading Sunshine inspirational. It makes me wonder, what could happen in the world if we each made it our intention to spread a little sunshine with everyone we meet?

~ *Laurie Smith*



Letter About Trailing After the Wayshower

Fredrick Zydek

Dear Thomas:

I've never been very good at following Jesus. If it came to a choice of hanging out with twelve other guys to explain the process of the universe or staying home with a good book, I'd choose the book every time.

I haven't been very good about kicking over the tables of the money changers in the temple either. I tend to trust the Spirit once my church board has been voted into place and I concentrate on making sure my weekly check is tithed from love.

You can't believe how poorly I heal the sick, walk on water, or change it into wine. I've read the recipes for those tricks a dozen times. I might as well have watched a rerun on TV.

Still, imitating some of his behavior has come easy for me. I love talking to the gurus and teachers in the

Fredrick Zydek is the author of eight collections of poetry, T'Kopechuck: The Buckley Poems will be published by Winthrop Press later this year. As a theologian, Fredrick was inspired to read the book Friends in High Places by Thomas Shepherd and it was a turning point on his spiritual journey. Zydek and Shepherd became and remain friends. This particular piece is written for Tom. Formerly a professor of creative writing and theology at the University of Nebraska and later at the College of Saint Mary. He is the editor for Lone Willow Press. When he isn't engaged in writing, Fredrick is a gentleman farmer.

temple, I'm great when it comes to sitting down to a scrumptious Seder meal, and I don't know anyone more capable than I am of ending up stranded in a desert place for forty days at a time.

I'm pretty good at going out looking for lost sheep too. Even my pets were all rescued from alongside a road or taken when the folks next door moved and left some behind. I did once manage to anger a few Pharisees so much—they wanted to stone me, but so far I haven't offended anyone enough to be crucified. Good thing too. If I haven't been able to follow Jesus' good examples in every phase of my personal life, my hunch is that I'm not quite ready to pull off a resurrection either.

Frederick Lydek

P O E T R Y



Seedtime

Chet Corey

Guilt is the gate left open;
grief, its pathway scuffed bare of grass.

It must be walked barefoot
the long winter

so that the seeds of suffering
another season sowed
may be blown away with spring wind.

At One With the Living God

Anonymous

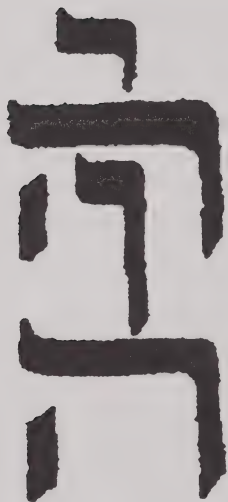
All that matters is to be one with the living God.
To be a creature in the house of the God of life.

Chet Corey's poetry has appeared in secular and religious publications, most recently in South Dakota Review and Windhover: A Journal of Christian Literature. He leads retreats in "Writing Poetry of the Sacred," "Writing out of Grief & Loss," and "The Poetry of Prayer" at retreat centers in the Midwest.

Yud-Hay-Vav-Hay

Michal Mahgerefteh

When your name
Rests upon my lips
Sweetness enriches
The edge of my soul
Letter by letter



Yud-Hay-Vav-Hay—this is the Hebrew alphabet—the spelling of the name of God—best understood by reading only the bold letters.

Michal Mahgerefteh was born in Israel and has lived in the U.S. since 1986. She is the founder, publisher and editor of Poetica Magazine, Reflections of Jewish Thought. The magazine is dedicated to showcasing poetry, prose, essays and short stories reflecting on the Jewish experience.

Illustration by Rabbi Marcia Prager, www.rabbimarciaprager.homestead.com

The Chorus Line

Joyce McKinley

The mountains sing.
Their songs are nectar for the birds.
Their rivers, overflow
with music of the northern winds.

Through the canyons,
a symphony of trees begin
a melody combining
the drums of ancient spirits with
the crash of falling water.

Echoes play against a cliff
where the clouds commence to call
the chorus line to ebb the tide.

His wind chimes ring,
as God conducts the great divide
the land continues to sing.

Joyce McKinley's work has appeared in such publications as Chaffin Journal, Main Street Rag, Harp-Strings Poetry Journal, The Raintown Review and Capper's. She lives in the beautiful Texas hill country with her husband, Edward, her handicapped brother, Velton, two dogs, and three Maine Coon cats.

spring, as in "to come into being"

Elizabeth Hahn

Keep from
turning on the light
so this day is not over;
through wintershrunken windows
now pried open
a sweep of pear and cherry,
fresh-turned earth,
grass leavings,
rides in and out like tidewash,
sweeter in the dark.
The house is full of no-one.
At this window post,
I am the rookie sentry
at a sudden armistice.
Below me,
porch lights come on
like beacons,
front doors slam,
the yards go quiet.
And on my lap

Elizabeth Hahn's award-winning poems have appeared in journals in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. She is a professor emerita of English at Southern Connecticut State University and now lives in Nashville, TN where she and her husband serve on the board of their son's production company Filmhouse.

the lines of a new poem
respond calmly
to some question
no amount of winter
could get right.
Do not touch the lamp.
I have light sufficient.

A Roost of Robins
Nancy Compton Williams

A hundred rising suns
alight on naked limbs,
dizzy the wood,
flicker the fallen leaves.

Tomorrow will dawn
without a berry
left on a branch—
a splendor paled.

Since her retirement from teaching high school English, Nancy Compton Williams has had over one hundred poems published in journals including Theology Today, Hiram Poetry Review, and Kansas Quarterly. Her first book of poetry is entitled Stillness Walks on Water.

Gardens of the Universe

A Cosmic Chronicle

Tom Keevey

A divine garden,
infinite grandeur and mystery
Pulsing, throbbing with blazing lights,
caves of darkness.
A cosmic forest, unending landscape,
awesome liturgy
The universe, scriptures of God's great wilderness.

In a single moment, life begins,
continuous journey of diversity
Dark matter, mystical night so pregnant,
nurturing, a bed of fertility.
Stars and planets, galaxies exploding,
stretching expanding
From one to many, sacrifice and compassion,
all communing.

A small garden of the cosmos, tiny, blue,
floating in a galaxy.
The Milky Way, unique, bursting with life,
Gaia by name.

Living in Ewing, NJ, Tom Keevey enjoys spending time with his wife and friends, writing and gardening. He pursued liturgical and theological studies at Institut Catholique, Paris and Ottawa University, Canada. Tom taught at St. John's University, NY, and has worked in the NJ Division of Criminal Justice, providing services to crime victims. He is an avid student of Thomas Berry.

Billions of years becoming,
 composing its own symphony.
The Earth, such a marvel to gaze upon,
 God's singular flame.

Spending seven long days,
 tilling the soil, still evolving.
Cool nights, stories,
 all creatures with Eve and Adam, praising.
The Lord of the universe,
 delighting in his beautiful garden
Sabbath celebration, God and creation rest,
 all sing Amen.

Truly, a home for all life forms,
 a place of beauty and wonder.
Mighty oceans, restless streams,
 winds with no boundaries, fertile pasture,
Fire brightens the day,
 distant lights the night sky, ever so somber
Mountains with memories, silent stones and fields,
 a Eucharist of nature.

Years pass, Wisdom Incarnate enters the garden,
 walks the earth
Reading the book of creation,
 teaching the way, truth, new birth
Seeding it with goodness,
 love and compassion, mystical forces
With stories, preaching and healing,
 a gospel of resources.



Prepositional Living

Virgil Cordano

May we be blessed with the conviction that each one of us is an individual person in community and for community.

To use grammatical terms in a symbolic sense, life is meant to be prepositional: we are to live the prepositions *among*, *with*, and *for*. May we acknowledge and welcome the evident truth that we are of necessity *among* other persons with whom we interact. And more than just being among others, may we intentionally choose to be *with* one another in inviting and caring presence. And more than being among and with others, may we be *for* one another in meeting needs and promoting the true good of each other.

If we fail to live prepositional lives, we are just an unwelcoming group of isolated and often opposing pronouns, nouns and adjectives: I am I, you are you; this is mine and that is yours; *we* simply become *us* and *them*. Or, we are natives and foreigners; invited and uninvited; favored and not favored; liked and disliked; loved and hated; chosen and rejected; winners

Father Virgil Cordano, O.F.M. has been a priest for sixty years. A book about his life, Padre: The Spiritual Journey of Father Virgil Cordano, edited by Mario T. Garcia, has recently been published by Santa Barbara Capra Press. He was pastor and president of the former Franciscan Theological Seminary at the Old Mission in Santa Barbara.

and losers; successes and failures; strong and weak; first and last; right and wrong; true and false.

Again, grammatically speaking, some persons are more like verbs, often caught up in nonreflective, spontaneous, misdirected, harmful activity without any awareness of being *among*, *with* and *for* others.

We are to be prepositional toward all persons and all classes of people. There are men and women—rich and poor; privileged and underprivileged; powerful and weak; known and unknown: a majority and a minority; very large number of races and ethnic peoples— brown, black, yellow and white. We are Americans and foreigners; republicans, democrats, independents and members of other political parties—within them, liberals, conservatives, and moderates.

Then there are Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and many other separate and often contentious religious bodies.

May we choose to live prepositionally and be grammatically correct: I for you, and you for me, and we for all. May God who is totally and lovingly *among*, *with*, and *for* all persons so inspire us. To add another preposition, it is God who sends us *to* other persons to be *among*, *with*, and *for* them. Summarily, modifying William Shakespeare...“to be or not to be”—prepositional—“that is the question.”

Peace Planet, a recently published a book by Nan Merrill with Barbara Taylor, features an inspirational thought, photograph, and prayer for each country on our planet. While looking through it, my husband came across the page dedicated to the country of Bhutan and admitted that it was one with which he was unfamiliar. (The only country that seemed to have escaped his memory after high school geography!) I, too, had never heard of it. Through a wonderful stream of serendipity in the days following this discovery, the magnificence of Bhutan, a country unknown to many, became apparent to us. On a weekend getaway to Washington DC, my husband visited an older friend, whom he had not seen in over thirty-four years. While together, they called her daughter who lives in Thailand. The daughter was hosting a friend from none other than Bhutan. This young woman introduced my husband to Bhutan's notion of measuring Gross National Happiness rather than Gross National Product. Several days later, while attending a conference, I engaged in conversation with a woman who had lived in Bhutan for a brief period. Then, as I was surfing the internet, you guessed it, I came across an article referencing Bhutan's measurement of Gross National Happiness. Given this amazing chain of events pointing us to Bhutan, we thought you, our readers, might also enjoy learning more about this unique place. With the permission of the author, Shantanu Dutta, we present the following article.

~ Lisa Clayton, Editorial Staff



Kingdom of Bhutan: Measuring Gross National Happiness

Shantanu Dutta

From our school days, we have been used to hearing the word Gross National Product as the measure of a country's affluence. The economic advancement of a country, and by extension the degree of that country's status in the world, has been graded largely by this benchmark. The general approach of the international community has been to assign a country's global standing on the basis of its GNP. There has been some recognition over the years that this kind of appraisal is too materialistic and does not provide sufficient weight to nonmaterial and intangible dimensions of life but until recently, not much had been done to come up with an alternative measure.

It was left to Bhutan, the diminutive Himalayan kingdom, to challenge this way of ranking. In the Buddhist tradition, greed, consumerism and an over emphasis on a materialistic way of life are not desirable ends to pursue. Proceeding along this line of thought, the king, Jigme Singye Wangchuk,

Shantanu Dutta is a doctor by training and a development professional by vocation. He is an onlooker of events happening in India and the world, with a special interest in society, politics and other intangibles that impact our lives. Shantanu decided to write something about Bhutan's GNH, sharing his thoughts as an individual, as well as a development professional.

Photo of the dzong, or monastery, in Paro, Bhutan, by Bob Krist





believes it is more important for his countrymen to be happy, than to be rich. Their traditional way of life has ensured them happiness for many years and therefore should be preserved.

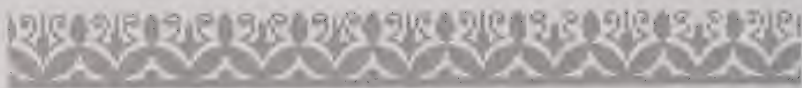
A few years ago, King Wangchuck told the former *New York Times* South Asia correspondent, Barbara Crossette, "Being a small country, we do not have economic power. We do not have military muscle. We cannot play a dominant international role, because of our small size and population and because we are a landlocked country. The only factor we can fall back on...which can strengthen Bhutan's sovereignty...is the unique culture we have." The government has accordingly kept a tight grip on matters of culture, a legacy from the Drukpa Kagyu lineage of Tantric Mahayana Buddhism. Bhutanese are required to wear their official national dress, the robe-like gho for men and the jacket and apron-like kira for women. To control tourism and development, only a limited number of visas are granted to foreign visitors each year.

The King of Bhutan has proclaimed "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product. Happiness takes precedence over economic prosperity in our nation's developmental process." He coined this term "Gross National Happiness" (GNH) in 1972 signifying his commitment to an economy and philosophy where progress and state planning processes would be guided by Buddhist values and priorities, rather than by blindly following norms used in the "outside world."

Today, the concept of GNH has been picked up by others outside of Bhutan. A wide range of

initiatives, across the world, embrace this concept, defining prosperity in more holistic terms, measuring actual well-being rather than consumption. Although GNH as a measurement is not without its critics, it has attained some recognition as an alternative metric to determining the progress of nations, even though it is not yet widely used. The UN Human Development Report is still based on tracking the indicators that Mahbub Al Huq, the Pakistani economist, developed in the 1990s. Recent reports, however, have begun referring to Bhutan's unique model.

In the meantime, Bhutan continues its policy of GNH. The focus remains on cultural promotion and good governance, based on Buddhist spiritual values. Material and technological progress is not rejected or banned, but it must not occur to the detriment of humanity's soul. Mental and psychological wealth are genuine considerations in Bhutan. Happiness, rather than monetary wealth, is embraced as the measure for Bhutan's prosperity.



Random Reflections

The Dandelion

StaciAnne Grove

Over the past few weeks of working in my small garden I've come to understand the beauty and gifts of just pulling up roots of grass and weeds from the garden. It forces me to pace myself, be gentle, pull evenly with pressure, determine what is a weed, and what isn't. There is something almost sedative and meditative about this whole process.

As I spend time out there digging around and planting in the dirt, I realize that I am talking with my grandfather, appreciating all he taught me when I was a child and didn't even realize I was listening. "Be gentle. Go slow. Pull evenly. Be sure to get the roots. Make sure you get them all. Make sure that you get them all."

I garden without gloves, and find myself running my fingers in the dirt, taking in the pleasant coolness, the aroma, and just sensing possibility in my hands and fingers. There is something energizing about getting my hands dirty, something that allows the whole world to drop away as I find myself talking with the creatures that are magically appearing—the ladybugs, the bees,

StaciAnne Grove is a photographer, writer, and closet philosopher in Essex, VT. She works as an administrative assistant at the Howard Center for Human Services. She's the Green Lady to her husband Geoff's black thumb. Her website can be found at www.sulis.net



Courtesy of StaciAnne Grooe

the HUGE earthworms (I'm having *Dune* flashbacks here!). I talk to the plants, the creatures, and the wind. At the end of a couple of hours I'm caked in layers of clay and dirt on my knees and hands.

There are those around me who may say that I'm off my rocker. But, for the first time in a long time, I am allowing myself the time to be sick—and take care of myself. I'm taking the time to do something that brings me joy. I'm going slowly and making sure the garden is not all about work. It's nurturing; it's taking the time to care for something I know I can help and will bring beauty (and sustenance) into the world. It's talking to the others who are lovingly doing the same.

Somehow the quiet of no electric lights, no electric fans, no television, no radio - just winds, bugs, and the voice of a child playing nearby with dad "Flower? Flower. FLOWER." The little boy's voice moves from questioning, to recognizing, to displaying and running around showing anyone who will look up, listen and take note his wondrous prize.

A Dandelion

You may call it a weed - but to this little guy, it's a dozen roses from Daddy, a flower from his garden. The joyous, unstoppable energy of the dandelion is magnified by the child.

This dandelion reflects both the radiance of the sun and the power and frailty of the moon over the course of its life. The dandelion is the strength and cunning and power of the lion whose name it carries, a brilliant flash of yellow in a solid sea of green, and the lightness of a wish on the wind. . . a gossamer moon waiting for you to come and make your wishes

known, to carry them away on wings. It is the flower of the god and goddess—sun and moon, vibrant and full and beautiful, in life and in death.

So go outside today. Look for the flash of yellow in your lawn and fields. Look for the gossamer moon waving in the breeze. Stop. Appreciate the unstoppable, untamable energy of the dandelion.

P R A Y E R S



One Fashion of Redemption

Timothy A. Pitrof

“Redeeming”

Is there a more beautiful and promising word?

“Redeeming grace”

There is no oxymoron here.

The passages of life have been
completely cleared and enriched
by the fresh fragrance
of a multitude of lustrous flowers
that have always stood by.

An endearing fresh fragrance that has
forever stood by.

To heal and to overwhelm.

Timothy A. Pitrof is a life-long resident of Wisconsin, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Social Welfare. He considers himself a forty-eight-year-old novice who tries to be so subtle in his religious references, he doesn't even capitalize the Divine. "I know I've erred," he says, "I just hope I'm forgiven."

Go Like the River

Omar Khayyam (as translated by Edward Fitzgerald)

Like wind I go
With them the Seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with mine own hand wrought to make it grow;
And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd—
“I came like Water, and like Wind I go.”

I Saw

Rabindranath Tagore

I slept and dreamt that life was joy
I woke and saw that life was service
I acted and behold! service was joy.

Transformation

John Constantine Mastor

Creating a new spirit
a new disposition
rebirth a new life a
work in progress.

John Constantine Mastor attended the University of Washington where he majored in Sociology. His last chapbook Studio Portrait was published by the Plowman Press in 1999. John's work appears in dozens of magazines and journals. He is Episcopalian, an animal lover, and part-time warehouse worker.

Young Dene girls in Yellowknife by Tessa Macintosh



Shaman Prayer

Great Mystery,
Master of our lives, master of all things
visible and invisible;
Master of every spirit, good and bad;
command the good spirits to be favorable to us and
keep the bad spirits from working evil on us.

Oh Grand Mystery;
Preserve the lives of such of our elders who are
inclined to give counsel to the young.
Preserve our children and multiply their number and
let them be the comfort and support of declining
years. Preserve our corn and animals, and let no
famine desolate our land; protect our villages and
guard our lives.

Great Mystery,
If now be time for some of us to close our lives on
Mother Earth, let us journey to the great country of
our spirits where we may meet our friends and rela-
tives and where you are pleased to shine upon all
with a bright, warm, eternal blaze!

Great Mystery;
Make known to us your pleasure by sending us the
Spirits of Dreams; proclaim your will in the night,
and we will perform in the day.

Oh Great, Oh Grand Mystery;
Harken to our voice. Remember us always, for we are
all thy children, descended from Thee.

BOOKS FOR THE JOURNEY

A room without books is like a body without a soul.

~ Cicero

PRAYING WITH POWER

by Josè Luis Stevens

Watkins Publishers, April 2005

Web site: www.dbponline.co.uk

Shamans are the original spiritual teachers on this planet. They developed powerful techniques and strategies to help their tribes survive the most difficult conditions. *Praying with Power* by Josè Luis Stevens is our bridge between ancient shamanic practices and prayer with wisdom and heart for our time and place. Whatever your religion or spiritual path, following shamanic techniques offered in this book will give you the key to a satisfying and productive prayer life.

Stevens lays out many specifics of little known shamanic techniques for gaining maximum benefit from praying, such as, emphasizing silence and listening deeply following prayer; because only by listening for a response can one hear the Spirit.

Josè Luis Stevens offers no spiritual dogma but invites us to build upon the examples of 45 prayers he gives for special needs, circumstances, and occasions to create your own personal prayers—prayers which can produce extraordinary results.

~ Publishers Review

EVENING THOUGHT:

Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community

by Thomas Berry

Edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker

Sierra Club Books, October 2006

Web site: www.sierraclub.org/books

Among the contemporary voices for the Earth, none resonates like that of noted cultural historian Thomas Berry. His teachings and writings have inspired a generation's thinking about humankind's place in the Earth community and the universe, engendering widespread critical acclaim and a documentary film of his life and work.

This new collection of essays, from various years and occasions, expands and deepens ideas articulated in his earlier writings and also breaks new ground. Berry opens our eyes to the full dimensions of the ecological crisis, framing it as a crisis of spiritual vision.

Applying his formidable erudition in cultural history, science, and comparative religions, he forges a compelling narrative of creation and communion that reconciles modern evolutionary thinking and traditional religious insights concerning our integral role in Earth's society.

While sounding an urgent alarm at our current dilemma, Berry inspires us to reclaim our role as the consciousness of the universe and thereby begin to create a true partnership with the Earth community. With *Evening Thoughts*, this wise elder has lit another beacon to lead us home.

~ Publishers Review

Inukshuk

In Inuktitut, the Inuit language, *Inukshuk* means “in the image of man.” The word originates from the morphemes *Inuk* (person) and *shuk* (ersatz or substitute). The inukshuk—a construction of rocks in the shape of a person, is a spirit symbol seen all across the Arctic. It reaches far back into the history of the Inuit and carries with it strong purpose and meaning.

For centuries, caribou hunters on the barrens used inukshuks as a simple solution to a big problem. Few in number, traveling on foot and using only bows and arrows, it was difficult to keep the caribou from stampeding every which way across the vast, treeless tundra. So the hunters constructed rows of inukshuks to herd the animals toward their companions lying in wait. These “silent spirit-figures” increased their workforce and gave the hunters that little extra edge they needed. The inukshuk has also been used, from time immemorial, as a directional signal. In a land where travel is difficult, storms are frequent, and there are very few natural landmarks, the inukshuk, set high on a hill, points the way. Finally, as a spirit symbol, inukshuks were placed at the edge of a dangerous water crossing. Those about to attempt the crossing would place gifts at the foot of the inukshuk as a sort of prayer for protection, guidance and a safe transition.

In 1999, the Inuit created their own Territory of Nunavut in the Canadian Arctic. The inukshuk is now emblazoned on the Nunavut flag and represents the Spirit of the Inuit—symbolizing survival, their sense of hope and creativity, as well as their close attachment to their land and culture.

The inukshuk is the basis for the logo of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Canada!

The Inuit preferred spelling is inuksuk in Nunavik in the Southern part of Baffin Island. In many of the central Nunavut dialects, it has the etymologically related name Inuksugaq. However, the predominant English spelling is Inukshuk; pronounced Inookshook.



Inukshuk at sunset, Cape Dorset by Tessa Macintosh

E N D P I E C E



Ashokan Farewell

Louise Hutner

As I've thought of how to write a farewell to you, my companions for the last several years on our sacred journey together, a song has kept rising up and singing to me: "Ashokan Farewell." It's a beautiful, haunting waltz melody, a song of loss in the style of a Scottish lament or Irish air. It was played on two violins at my sister's memorial service in the Princeton University Chapel near the time I became the editor of *SACRED JOURNEY*. Now it's the memory of those strings, echoing through that vast and holy space, that I've been hearing once again, nudging me for days until I finally got the message.

The sun is sinking low in the sky above Ashokan,
The pines and the willows know soon we will part.

There's a whisper in the wind of promises unspoken,
And a love that will always remain in my heart.

So this is what I've been waiting to say to you, and could only find through stillness and listening.

Now I understand this song as the parentheses that mark the stages of my life's journey. They held me with my sister, and then turned to enfold me with you. Life is filled with the melodies of loss, and I know I'll hear this one again; but with each ending, new dreams arise. As Michele and I say farewell, we carry wonderful memories that will feed our new dreams for the next phase of our journey. May all of us have the courage and faith to nurture our dreams until they blossom in a field of peace and gratitude.

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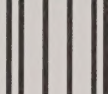
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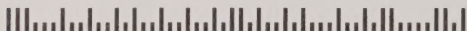
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